THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL

Ancient Arabic Order
Nobles of the Mystic Shrine
for North America

The following address by Noble Warren G. Harding was delivered before the Imperial Council at its Forty-ninth Annual Session, held in Washington, D. C., June 5, 1923; and it was ordered by the Imperial Council that this address be printed and sent to all Temples of the Order, and that the same be printed in the first notice of a business or ceremonial session following its receipt and sent to each member of the Temple.

Yours in the Faith,

Edward V. Dykeman

Imperial Potentate.

ATTEST:

Edward Powell

Imperial Recorder.

ADDRESS OF NOBLE WARREN G. HARDING
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Imperial Potentate and Nobles of the Council:

Your exceptionally courteous patience in waiting for the Imperial Potentate and myself you may be sure is greatly appreciated. I know it was not in our hearts to keep you, but we sat in fascination watching the most wonderful parade it has ever been my privilege to see. We could not take ourselves out of the atmosphere of inspiration and wonder even to be courteous to you.

It is a great pleasure to participate in this opening session of the Council. It need not be said that I cordially join in the words of welcome and hearty greetings already uttered.

I like the atmosphere of fraternity. I rejoice in the knowledge that I am addressing a body where every heartbeat is loyally American, where every impulse is American, where every commitment and consecration are to the republic and its free institutions.

Sometimes there are false impressions about fraternal organizations. No man ever took the oaths and subscribed to the obligations with greater watchfulness and care than I exercised in receiving the various rites of Masonry, and I say it with due deliberation and without fear of breaking faith, I have never encountered a lesson, never witnessed an example, never heard an obligation uttered which could not be openly proclaimed to the world. More, if the lessons taught were heeded, the obligations read were assumed, if the relationships urged were adopted, men would be infinitely better in their human relationships, and better citizens of this country.

Fraternities must be just, if they are to survive. And they must be just to appeal to men in their fellow-relationships. Secret fraternity is one thing, secret conspiracy is quite another. I know this meeting today is in ennobled fraternity.

One must recognize that fraternity has its abuses. Abused fraternity is no more valuable than the hypocrisy which teaches how beautifully worth while is honest religion. But fraternity deals with realities and cures its own abuses.

A President would not be ethical if he related fraternal appeals to which he must turn a deaf ear. I will have said enough if I suggest that men lose their right of fraternal hearing when they transgress the law of the land.

The abuse I had in mind is the imposition upon fraternal relationship to promote selfish ends. Perhaps a recital of a home-town experience will illustrate my point. There came to our town a number of years ago two brothers to engage in mercantile enterprise. One joined the Methodist church and the other the Presbyterian. Still business failed to move with a whirl. Then one joined the Masons and the other the Knights of Pythias. They picked out the churches with the larger congregations, and the fraternities with the larger memberships. Some local observer wondered at these divergent inclinations in two brothers, and there was comment about it. Here was fraternity being played for selfish ends. We had another fraternity, rare in kind and transitory in existence, which dealt with men's idiosyncrasies and foibles and imperfections. It was a fraternal playground, which sometimes witnessed rough play, and performed many a surgery in character. So the lure of membership in the Ancient and Honorable Order of Haymakers was held out to the joining merchants, and they fell for it. The fee was very modest, and the treasurer spent all the funds at each meeting of the order, but the initiation was imposing, revealing and never forgotten.

When the two merchants came to receive their degree, their first revelation came to them, while locked in a little 6 by 8 antechamber, between which and the lodge room there was a partition only 8 feet high, with a great open space above through which could be heard all that was said among the Haymakers in solemn session. The eligibility and desirability of the candidates were discussed for an hour, and I fear, alas! the candidates heard every word. Their joining proclivity was emphasized, and I suspect objections were urged that were not wholly justified. In a bit of cheating, which must have been forgiven long ere this, the ministers of the two churches were impersonated, though the impersonators sometimes fell short of clerical terms of speech. The Haymakers, with rare facility, turned tanners, and did a wonderful job of it. Manifestations of restlessness in the anteroom were ignored, and after the alleged pastors had retired to their homes, the degree was given, and without stint. All went well until the next day, when the two brothers started out to interview the ministers who had spoken. It was difficult for the innocent ministers to understand, but the two joiners soon came to understanding, and the Haymakers lost two members, the town lost its new mercantile establishment within a week, and two strangers who donned the cloak of fraternity for commercial gain saw themselves as others appraised them.

There is an honest and righteous and just fraternal life in America. It embraces millions of our men and women, and a hundred fraternal organizations extend their influence into more than a third of American homes, and make ours a better republic for their influence.

Fraternity is inherent in man. It is manifest in the beasts of the fields and the birds in the air. It is our obligation to make the most of it for human benefit betterment. It more than enters our daily life and ministers ten thousand daily charities and fraternal reliefs. In the lodge room there is molded what becomes public opinion, and contributes to the moving forces of developing civilization.

It matters not what is said of human selfishness, it matters not what seeming lack of sympathy and fellowship is sometimes encountered, every man worth while has in him the yearning to be worth while, to do that which gives him title to the activities of human brotherhood. It is the business of organized fraternalism to turn these natural

traits to highest helpfulness. In every worthy order the principles of civil and religious liberty, justice and equality are taught in lecture and obligation. A respect for the rights of others, the very essence of fraternity, is stressed everywhere until the rule of justice is the guaranty of righteous fraternal relationships.

I wish somehow we could have fraternity among nations, as it is taught in America among men. I do not mean to employ sign, grip and password, which afford an appealing mystery to our relationship, but the insistent demand for just dealing, the respect for right of others, and the ideals of brotherhood recited in the Golden Rule, and the righteous fellow-relationship which every man knows his God approves. Under such a reign of fraternity cruel human warfare will never come again.

I like the highly purposed fraternity, because it is our assurance against menacing organization. In the very naturalness of association men band together for mischief, to exert misguided zeal, to vent unreasoning malice, to undermine our institutions. This isn't fraternity, this is conspiracy. This isn't associated uplift, it is organized destruction. This is not brotherhood, it is the discord of disloyalty and a danger to the republic. But so long as 20,000,000 of Americans are teaching loyalty to the flag, the cherishment of our inherited institutions and due regard for constitutional authority and the love of liberty under the law, we may be assured the future is secure.

There is no misconstruing the aims and purposes of our loftier American fraternalism. For the great brotherhood there is the patriotic appraisal of the heritage of the republic. Here is representative democracy, wrought in sacrifice and toil, amid liberty's highest aspirations, and no force, no violence, no alien purpose, no social madness shall be permitted to destroy it.

I think I know the very soul of Masonry, out of which the Shrine has come to lighten our burdens and add cheer to our daily lives. There is both quantity and quality in the nobility of the Shrine. It is more than a mere Masonic playground. Conceived in cheer, the order hungered for more than play, though we need more of play in our daily lives.

It craved to be helpful, and it is aglow in noble achievement. Its initiates have been schooled in patriotism, and welcomed new commitment to home and country. I like to think there is special significance that this year the Imperial Council has come to Washington, bringing the Shrine to the monumental shrine of the great father of the nation, to pledge afresh love for the republic, loyalty to its institutions, and an exalted brotherhood for those who consecrate life and sacred honor to this republic's preservation.